

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-43. (Canceled)

44. (Previously Presented) A method of manufacturing articles to be included in cans, comprising:

intermittently feeding a metal strip having an upper surface and a lower surface into an article forming unit; and

providing at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip with laser engravings from a laser unit when the strip is in an immobilized condition and before the strip is fed into the article forming unit where the articles are formed, said laser engravings forming marks on at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip.

45-56. (Canceled)

57. (Previously Presented) A method as set forth in claim 44, further comprising guiding the strip past the laser unit.

58-60. (Canceled)

61. (Previously Presented) A method as set forth in claim 44, wherein the articles are opening tabs to be attached to ends of the cans.

62. (Canceled)

63. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for manufacturing articles to be included in cans, comprising:

a supply of a metal strip having an upper surface and a lower surface;

an article forming unit;

a strip feeder between the supply and the article forming unit, the strip feeder intermittently moving the strip into the article forming unit such that the strip is in an immobilized condition between periods of intermittent movement;

a laser unit arranged between the supply of metal strip and the article forming unit, the laser unit providing laser engravings on at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip, the laser engravings forming marks on at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip to be formed into the articles by the article forming unit; and

a control unit in communication with the laser unit, the laser unit being controlled so that the laser engravings are provided on at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip when the strip is in the immobilized condition between the periods of intermittent movement.

64-74. (Canceled)

75. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as set forth in claim 63, wherein the laser unit is arranged adjacent to the article forming unit but does not impart vibrations to or otherwise disrupt operation of the article forming unit.

76. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as set forth in claim 63, further comprising a guide that guides said strip past said laser unit.

77-79. (Canceled)

80. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as set forth in claim 63, wherein the laser unit is disconnectible for allowing article manufacture without marking of the strip.

81. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as set forth in claim 63, wherein said articles are opening tabs to be attached to ends of the cans.

82-89. (Canceled)

90. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for manufacturing articles to be included in cans, comprising:

a supply of a metal strip having an upper surface and a lower surface;

an article forming unit;

a strip feeder between the supply and the article forming unit, the strip feeder moving the strip into the article forming unit in periods of rapid movement;

a laser unit arranged between the supply of metal strip and the article forming unit, the laser unit providing laser engravings on at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip, the laser engravings forming marks on at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip to be formed into the articles by the article forming unit; and

a control unit in communication with the laser unit, the laser unit being controlled so that the laser engravings are provided on at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip when the strip is between the periods of rapid movement.

91. (Previously Presented) A method of manufacturing articles to be included in cans, comprising:

feeding a metal strip having an upper surface and a lower surface into an article forming unit, said strip being fed in periods of rapid movement; and

providing at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip with laser engravings from a laser unit when the strip is in between the periods of rapid movement and before the strip is fed into the article forming unit where the articles are formed, said laser engravings forming marks on at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip.

92. (Canceled)

93. (Previously Presented) A method of manufacturing opening tabs to be attached to ends of cans, comprising:

intermittently moving a metal strip having an upper surface and a lower surface along a predetermined path into an opening tab forming unit where the opening tabs are formed;

providing a laser unit along the path at a position that precedes the opening tab forming unit; and

forming laser engraved marks with the laser unit on at least a selected surface of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip when the strip is in an immobilized condition, whereby the laser unit is controlled during immobilization of the strip such that the laser engraved marks form a distinct code on the selected surface.

94. (Previously Presented) A method as set forth in claim 93, wherein the distinct code is at least one of a code that indicates a site of production, an hour code indicating when the tab was produced, a minute code indicating when the tab was produced, and a code that indicates that a person who opens the can using the tab is a winner.

95. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for manufacturing opening tabs to be attached to ends of cans, comprising:

a supply of a metal strip having an upper surface and a lower surface;

an opening tab forming unit provided along a predetermined path following the supply and structured to form opening tabs;

a strip feeder structured to intermittently move the strip along the path into the opening tab forming unit;

a laser unit provided along the path at a position that precedes the opening tab forming unit, the laser unit providing laser engraved marks on at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip; and

a control unit in communication with the laser unit, the control unit controlling the laser unit so that the laser engraved marks are provided on at least a selected surface of the upper surface and the lower surface of the strip when the strip is in the immobilized condition, whereby the laser unit is controlled during immobilization of the strip such that the laser engraved marks form a distinct code on the selected surface.

96. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as set forth in claim 95, wherein the distinct code is at least one of a code that indicates a site of production, an hour code indicating when the tab was produced, a minute code indicating when the tab was produced, and a code that indicates that a person who opens the can using the tab is a winner.

97. (Canceled)

98. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 63, wherein the metal strip has a thickness defined between the upper surface and the lower surface, and the laser engravings extend into a metal portion of the metal strip to a depth that is within the thickness of the metal strip.

99. (Canceled)

100. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 44, further comprising extending the laser engravings a finite depth into a metal portion of the metal strip to form marks in at least one of the upper surface and the lower surface of the metal strip.

101. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 44, wherein the strip is in the immobilized condition for less than about 60 milliseconds for forming at least four characters.

102. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 63, wherein the strip is in the immobilized condition for less than about 60 milliseconds for forming at least four characters.

103. (Previously Presented) A method of manufacturing articles to be included in cans, comprising:

intermittently feeding a metal strip having a metal surface into an article forming unit;
and

providing the metal surface of the strip with laser engravings from a laser unit when the strip is in immobilized condition and before the strip is fed into the article forming unit where the articles are formed, the laser engravings forming marks into the metal surface of the strip.

104. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 103, further comprising:

providing a coating on the metal strip; and

extending the laser engravings through the coating and into the metal surface of the strip.

105. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 44, wherein the upper surface of the metal strip includes a coating and the coating is laser engraved.

106. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 105, wherein the laser engravings extend through the coating and into the metal strip.

107. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 105, wherein the articles are can ends and the laser engravings are provided in the can ends for traceability.

108. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 44, wherein the articles are tabs to be attached to can ends and the laser engravings include markings into the metal strip to indicate a person who uses a selected one of the tabs is a winner.

109. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 63, wherein the upper surface of the metal strip includes a coating and the coating is laser engraved.

110. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 109, wherein the laser engravings extend through the coating and into the metal strip.

111. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 109, wherein the articles are can ends and the laser engravings are provided in the can ends for traceability.

112. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 63, wherein the articles are tabs to be attached to can ends and the laser engravings include markings into the metal strip to indicate a person who uses a selected one of the tabs is a winner.